Peace and Righteousness

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3. M. McIllvaine



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## Deace and Righteousness

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever."

Isaiah, 32, 17.



HIS chapter is full of the spirit and hope of the Gospel. Standing amid the shadows of the night and the suggestions of the dawn this great

evangelical prophet and statesman forsees in majestic procession the glories of the golden age. And what are the visions that allure and gladden him? What does he see as with prophetic eye he peers into the far future? He sees the redemption of crooked and oppressive government: "A king shall reign in righteousness and princes shall rule in judgment." He sees the redemption of self-centered and aggressive individualism: "A man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest." He sees the redemption of nature: "The wilderness shall become a fruitful field and the desert bloom as the rose. Instead of the thorn there shall come up the fir tree and instead of the briar the myrtle tree." And over all the varied and wonderful vision rests the quietness and confidence of a large and permanent peace.

What then is this peace, and whence does it come? He tells us that it is a work, an effect. It is not the beginning of a process, but its end; not a root, but a fruit; not the creation of an imperial fiat, but the matured product of a moral order. You cannot command peace, you can only grow it. If you would have the reaping there must be the sowing; for the reaping of peace there must be the planting of righteousness. That is the law of the sequence. Observe the righteous order then can be grown the lilies of peace. Now we begin to appreciate the successions of this great chapter. The

first bugle peal proclaims not the advent of peace, but the enthronement of righteousness. The herald withholds the word peace until righteousness is established. "A king shall reign in righteousness and princes shall rule in judgment." That is the voice of the first trumpet, and only when certain great redemptions have been wrought, certain perversities corrected, certain authorities restored, certain pure and moral conditions recovered. is the second trumpet heard: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." That is the expression of the divine order as taught in the divine word. You cannot grow peace from unrighteousness, injustice, oppression, cruelty, wrong. Peace does not spring from such roots. "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" Not so. "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other." That is the sweet and beautiful fellowship. Peace appears and offers her lovely face when wooed by rectitude and justice.

Peace is the fruit of just and righteous principles applied to the social, industrial, economic, and international life of man. The passion for wealth and material power, with its "envy, hatred, malice. and all uncharitableness," is fatal to peace. There is something radically wrong in the political ideas and practices of the nations. Preachers talk of brotherhood, and parliaments of the rivalry of nations. Churches preach peace, and the press and the politicians plant the seeds of war. International relations are controlled by the theory that the interests of one nation are opposed to those of its neighbor; that the prosperity of one can be purchased by the impoverishment of others: that the standards of common morality do not apply to nations; that self-interest is their supreme law. Here we have the germ of the whole trouble, a radically wrong conception of morality and prosperity dominating the minds of the world's politicians. Until these ideas are effaced or modified by those of brotherhood, of mutual needs interests, obligations, rights and duties, interlacing and binding the nations in a community of interest, so that if one nation suffers others must suffer with it, there will be wars and rumors of wars. Political ambition says, obtain wealth and power at all costs; true wisdom says, not at the cost of justice and righteousness, or retribution is sure to follow. A state may become rich and powerful by injustice and oppression, but it is only laying up the seeds of implacable hatred and revenge that must issue eventually in war.

The seed of war is the lust of power Behind every war that the world has suffered from, on the one side or the other, is the lust of wealth, of commercial supremary, of political domination, of territorial aggrandisement. That more than anything else, it seems to me, though opinions may differ, is the cause of the present war. The great German nation to which we owe so much for its science learning, literature, art, has been for a generation under the influence of a materialistic philosophy, which denies every principle of morality as applied to nations, and rests everything upon force One of its teachers, Nietsche, who by his daring thinking, his poetic imagination his fascinating style, has gained a large following, teaches that the morality of

nations and of nature is ruthlessness: that the man who lives for others is a weakling and a degenerate; that he who exploits others, making of them stepping stones to power, is the ideal man, the super-man. That the will to dominate der Wille zur Macht, is the true principle of human action to be maintained at all hazards. "Everything is permitted to the strong," he says. Another, whose interpretation of history is the very pible to a large class in Germany, is von Treitschke, professor of history at Heidelburg, afterwards at Berlin, State Historian, a popular leader in the Reichstag. and editor of an influential journal. He teaches that the state's highest duty is to increase its power. "The Christian duty of sacrifice for something higher does not exist for the state, for there is nothing higher than it. Among all political sins the sin of feebleness is the most contemptible, it is the political sin against the Holy Ghost."

"\* \* The end all and be all of a State is power, and he who is not man enough to look this truth in the face should not meddle in politics." Shill another, von Bernhardi, whose book has had the largest sale in Germany of any in a generation, openly scoffs at the ideas of morality and honesty for nations, declares that might is the only right, and that right is decided by war. "Every government takes solely its own interests as the standard of action, however it may drape it with deductions of justice and sentiment."

- \* \* \* "The State's highest moral duty is to increase its power."
- \* \* \* "The State is justified in making conquests whenever its own advantage seems to require additional territory."
- \* \* \* "Self-preservation is the State's highest ideal and justifies whatever action it may take if that action be conducive to that end. The State is the sole judge of the morality of its own action. It is, in fact, above morality, or, in other words, whatever is necessary is moral."
- \* \* \* "In fact, the State is a law unto itself. Weak nations have not the same right to live as powerful and vigorous nations."

Such teachers, with many less known, in the universities and the press, have preached for a generation that it is the proud task of Germany to impose its civilization and culture on the world; that every other nation is decadent or barbarian; that Germany is powerful enough to accomplish its task; and that all considerations of ordinary morality, of international law, of treaty obligation, must yield to the necessity of fulfilling at any cost and by any means its paramount destiny. Bernhardi says, "We must not hold back in the hard struggle for the sovereignty of the world." The spirit of Bismarck, Germany's greatest statesman, with its brutal indifference to justice and morality, its firm belief that the German Empire is destined to become the dominant power of Europe, has descended upon the people. To prevent aggression they must be aggressive, to avoid absorption they must absorb, and anticipate robbery by robbery. By war the little State of Prussia has become great; by war it acquired Schleswig-Holstein; by war it obtained access to the Baltic, acquired the rich lands of Silesia. annexed a large part of Poland, humiliated Austria, gained Alsace and Lorraine with a huge indemnity, and has built up one of the most powerful, populous and prosperous nations of Europe. It has reached the utmost capacity of its own boundaries, with less territory than the State of Texas and a population nearly three-fourths as large as that of the United States, with a commerce second only to that of England, carried on under the guns and at the sufferance of its great rival. It must seek further expansion or go backward; it must become greater by the process which has made it great; and the whole nation for a generation has been straining every resource in the preparation for war. Bernhardi says: "The nation is rallying to the cry, world power or downfall, Weltmacht oder Niedergang."

It must be downfall; not to the Germany of industry, science, literature, culture, but to the Germany led by Prussian militarism, Prussian autocracy, Prussian ambition, Prussian conceit; or it must be the downfall of liberty as we understand it in Europe.

We are here this morning to pray for peace. The Christian people of America at the call of their Chief Magistrate are assembled in their churches to pray to the God of Peace that He will grant peace to the world. What do we mean, and what do we want when we pray for peace? Is it merely the cessation for a time of conflict and carnage, the destruction of life and property? That indeed is a thing greatly to be desired, and in the minds of many the chief thing. But we ought to want and pray for more than this. Nothing has yet been accomplished by the war that indicates any basis for a firm and lasting peace. I doubt if it would be for the advantage of humanity if it means only an interval of military quiescence to be employed in the preparation for another and greater war. I doubt if it would be well for the world that the war should cease until something has been accomplished that will stay accomplished; that this terrific expenditure of treasure and life should be without results, in some measure at least, to compensate for the irreparable outlay. Matters have gone so far that

they must go further, for if something be not settled and settled right, it will have to be resettled. What we need to pray to God for, and to work with God for, is the removal of causes that make war inevitable, and the establishment of conditions that make permanent peace possible.

That is, righteousness. If we want peace, deep, firm, lasting, we must above all pray for righteousness, and strive for righteousness; righteousness between man and man, between classes and interests, between nations and in nations; that the moral law, which is the law of righteousness, may prevail in the policies of nations and the private life of men. "Righteousness and judgment are the foundations of His throne." If God's government and sovereignty can rest on no other basis, how can any government or nation have any other sure foundation? Peace without righteousness is impossible. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," and that is as true of nations as of men. It is only crying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace."

Let us pray that peace when it comes may be a large, generous, magnanimous peace, for only so can it be a lasting peace. All this wild and foolish talk about the humiliation, the crushing, the dismemberment of Germany, is war talk. and only postpones the day of peace. The talk of politicians, like Mr. Winston Churchill, about "dragging the rats from their holes," and what will be done with Germany when it is under their feet, only inflames the passions of war on both sides, and makes peace more hopeless. Germany will fight for years and to the last ditch before accepting such humiliation and degradation. Our own South. with less than twenty millions of people, with no wealth or industrial power, carried on a war for four years against vastly greater forces and wealth. What will a nation of sixty-five millions, with sixty billions of wealth, do, if forced to fight to the last extremity? When peace comes, let it be granted on generous terms to a brave, patriotic, if mistaken foe, and let us avoid all thought and talk to the contrary. Let there be an indemnity to Belgium, though nothing can repair its loss, or atone for its suffering. Surely France is wise enough, England

rich enough, Russia big enough, to be above all financial exactions. They will find their largest indemnity in a lasting peace, and will save more in peace than they can hope to collect in war. France has shown what comes from a peace granted on ungenerous and humiliating terms, and there has never been a day since that peace was signed when France has not been preparing for a war of retaliation and revenge. Japan has set an example to Christian nations in concluding a victorious peace with Russia without a rouble or kopec of indemnity, and the result is that Russia and Japan today are fighting as allies side by side.

The talk about the punishment of Germany is not wise talk. Let the nation that is without sin among you cast the first stone. All nations, our own included, have obtained their colonies, or their increase of territory, by war and conquest, in precisely the same way that Germany is now trying to do. Her punishment must come, but what nation can inflict it without hypocrisy? The dismemberment of Germany would be a damage and loss to the world. It would mean the crip-

pling of Germany for good as well as for harm. It would remove from Russia's path the chief opponent of her ambition. The Slavic domination of Europe would have to be prevented by another great war. If Alsace and Lorraine are returned to France, and Schleswig-Holstein to Denmark, let it be by vote of the people and not by right of conquest. The transfer of lands and peoples from one nation to another by force of arms without consent of the people, is a political crime and a cause of war.

Not dismemberment but disarmament. Let us pray with all our hearts for the relief of Germany and Europe from the crushing burden of militarism, which is impoverishing the people and driving the nations into bankruptcy, the hideous nightmare that has made Europe for a generation an armed camp waiting for the signal of war. But disarmament is impossible without something to take the place of armaments, and that must be a court of arbitration, with international laws, and an international force to execute the laws. The policeman must stand behind the judge in international

law as in municipal and national law. Force without righteousness is abhorrent, but righteousness without force is often helpless. The effective powers of civilization must be back of the collective purpose of civilization to secure justice between nation and nation. This is the world's only hope. Treaties are worthless save as made effective by force. It is an accepted maxim of diplomacy that all treaties are abrogated or suspended by war. Alliances and armaments have proved powerless for the preservation of peace. If the world is brought, by the horrors of this war, to see that the only hope of peace is in the federation of nations, not for war but against war, it will be worth all that the war may cost.

Let us pray for all nations, for Germany as well as England; and with our prayers let our sympathy and pity go out to the people of Germany, whatever we may think of their princes or policies. Let us pray for the soldiers that God will keep them from the awful demoralization of war; for the wounded, the suffering, the dying, and the dead; for the widow, the fatherless, the homeless, the

starving; for the mourners who have looked their last on the faces that they loved, unable even to bury their beloved dead; above all for righteousness, that the spectre of war, the penalty of unrighteousness, may be banished to the abodes of night, and the troubled world may at last rest in righteousness under the brooding wings of the Angel of Peace.







